

Component III: Species of Greatest Conservation Need (Tier I Species)

“These are species whose needs must be specifically addressed, whether through focus areas, community types, or individually.”

Conservation efforts at the landscape and community scales offer great potential to leverage resources in order to benefit multiple species. However, some species are too specialized for broad-scale conservation efforts to do much good, or their populations have declined to the point where individually focused conservation is required. For these reasons the conservation concerns and needs range from surveys and monitoring or reintroduction to landscape level habitat restoration or protection. Fish, Wildlife & Parks has a clear obligation to use its resources and work with its partners to conserve Tier I species, regardless of the scale of conservation strategies identified.

Species of greatest conservation need (Tier 1) are covered in greatest detail. However, this does not mean that the other species are excluded. All vertebrate species as well as crayfish and mussels were assessed for conservation need. Most invertebrates were not included in the assessment due to lack of data. The need for data about invertebrates has been addressed in the inventory component of this Strategy. A complete list of species tier assignments can be found in Table 2. All species that have been assigned Tier I in this strategy have a status of low, declining or imperiled.

Invertebrates

During the initial planning stages, the FWP technical and steering committees determined that the Strategy would not include Montana’s invertebrate species. With nearly 1,000 species of aquatic invertebrates in the state, and at least twice that number of terrestrial invertebrates, it is impossible at this time to develop a Strategy to comprehensively address invertebrate conservation in Montana. However, it was decided to include aquatic mussels and crayfish. The possibility of securing long-term funding will allow for greater inventory and surveying of invertebrates. These species are especially important because many are considered bioindicators of overall habitat health.